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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 000027

DEPARTMENT FOR DS/IP/AF, DS/TIA/ITA, DS/IP/SPC/SO, INR, AND
AF/E

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/23/2029

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SUBJECT: GSE TAKES NEW COOPERATIVE APPROACH TO UNMEE

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald K. McMullen for Reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) The Eritrean government (GSE) has become more cooperative in its dealings with UNMEE, according to our closest UNMEE contact. Last week, the GSE sent four officials from the Ministry of Finance to help facilitate a VAT refund to UNMEE of more than \$500,000, levied during the past eight years. The GSE also requested UNMEE retrieve equipment such as water/fuel tanks and communications gear from their former sites in Assab, Barentu, and Adi Quala. Previously, the GSE refused to grant UNMEE travel permits or permission to retrieve this equipment. UNMEE's liquidation schedule has also been extended to at least the end of February 2009.

¶2. (C) UNMEE source said he thought the GSE was trying to make amends with UNMEE and the UN as a result of the recent Security Council resolution ordering Eritrea to depart Djiboutian territory by mid-February 2009. If so, we might expect to see GSE also soften its stance toward other UN agencies here, perhaps by permitting fuel deliveries. Post has likewise noted improved cooperation from the GSE on travel permits, pouch flow, and extension and acceptance of social invitations (septel).

MCMULLEN